

Script for the STARS for KIDS NOW video

Talking about the STARS for KIDS NOW Program

Did you know that Kentucky has a quality rating system for child care providers? Hello. My name is Mary Beth Jackson and I am the Division Director for the Division of Child Care. I want to share with you the STARS for KIDS NOW Program. This program is Kentucky's voluntary quality rating system for licensed Type I, licensed Type II and certified family child care homes. Ratings are from one to four stars. And a program's participation in STARS for KIDS NOW indicates a commitment to quality above the minimum standards required by the Division for Regulated Child Care. STARS for KIDS NOW is part of the KIDS NOW Initiative. The vision of this initiative is that all children in Kentucky are healthy, safe and possess the foundation that will enable school and personal success and live in strong families that are supported and strengthened within their communities. STARS for KIDS NOW provides parents with a tool to help identify quality when seeking a child care setting outside of their home. Parents can use the rating system to gain an understanding of the factors that contribute to quality care and education and can choose a child care setting that best matches their family's needs.

Talking to the Providers

It's really amazing how when you provide the materials that you need for children to learn you can see them playing with blocks and that they are doing things where they are doing spatial reasoning and they are thinking about patterns and all of those things are helping to prepare them with early math skills. And it is something that a lot of parents look at and they say oh the children are just playing, or you have great toys here, but they don't really realize the impact that these materials are having on the children when you use the environmental rating scale to set up the environment. It is to prepare the school...the children for school readiness. And your playground, you recently made some great changes to that that I know you are proud of. We are very proud of our playground. We remodeled that last summer. We had lots of help. We had help from your level, on your STARS Coordinator level and we even had help from, assistance from the playground experts. We do believe that all of this has had an impact, a direct impact on how the children have learned here at Harmony and how they will be better prepared for school and it has given them a safer environment, inside and outside.

How has the STARS Quality Care Program benefitted your child care program?

Noticeable things for us is just having the lower ratios in the classrooms. I think that that allows us to provide more one on one care for the children, more quality care. Also, I think it greatly decreases staff burnout, turnover, because the reality is the less children you have, the easier it is, the more you know you can work with the children one on one. Also, just like I said earlier, the financial incentive, the awards that you get when you participate, has just, we use all of that money for supplies. So our teachers don't have to worry about not having construction paper, not having puzzles when they get torn, you know torn up. They don't have to worry about not having books. We have money there that we can replace those materials as we need them.

How do you see that participation in STARS has benefitted the children here in your program? I think one of the best ways it has done that is by bringing out an outside perspective. I think that it has reinforced us in knowing that yes we are doing good, here's what we are doing good, here's what we are doing really good at, and then here's a few things that we can do better at. I also think it has been a tremendous morale booster for the staff. For somebody else to come in and say hey you are doing a good job is really a nice technique to happy staff equal happy kids.

What assistance did you receive while preparing for your STARS review?

Ms. Dawn, our SQC, has done many things for us. She has come in and done our scales, modeled for our teachers, given lessons on portion control. She has just been an all around blessing to say the least.

The STARS Quality Coordinator would come any time I needed her. She was there through email, through telephone and in person. She wasn't afraid to get her hands dirty. She came in and helped me move furniture. She gave me her phone number at home if I needed to call her because you know it is kind of stressful when you are going through somebody coming in to look at your program. But, she was there every step of the way. She guided me through every step. And it really helped a lot for her to be able to do that. And if she couldn't find the answer, she would find somebody that would know.

What got you interested? Why did you decide to participate in the STARS program? We felt like, as especially as a non-profit child care center that we needed a way to show parents and the outside community that we are a quality center. Ok. How have you seen that participation in STARS has benefitted your child care program? Oh, it has, we have benefitted greatly from the STARS program. We have increased knowledge for developmentally appropriate practice with our teachers. We have you know of course, our children are benefitting greatly. Just increased knowledge about good practices.

Reaching for the STARS!